

Guidelines for Existing Properties



Chapter 1:

Guidelines for Existing Properties

The following design guidelines for existing buildings shall apply to all properties constructed in the Old Town District's period of significance. Note that the guidelines for new construction should be used when planning alterations to an existing building in the district that is not considered significant.

A basic tenet of preservation is that one should minimize intervention in the historic building fabric. Therefore, in the treatment of a historic building, it is best to preserve those features that remain in good condition. For those that are deteriorated, repair rather than replacement is preferred. When replacement is necessary, it should be done in a manner similar to that used historically.

A key concept in the treatment of historic buildings is that the "character-defining features" of a property should be preserved. In the case of warehouse-type buildings found in Old Town, these features are broad in scale. For example, a traditional warehouse building had a simple form, was constructed of brick, had large loading door openings and docks. Ornamental detail was reserved for cornices and pilasters.

It is also important to note that alterations occurred during the period of significance. Typically, these were minor in scale in proportion to the overall mass of a building, and therefore did not diminish the overall character. For this reason, it is also appropriate to consider moderate alterations when the overall integrity of the property is maintained.

The design guidelines for treatment of historic buildings emphasize preserving the larger scale character-defining features, while allowing potential minor alterations that permit continued adaptive reuse of the properties.

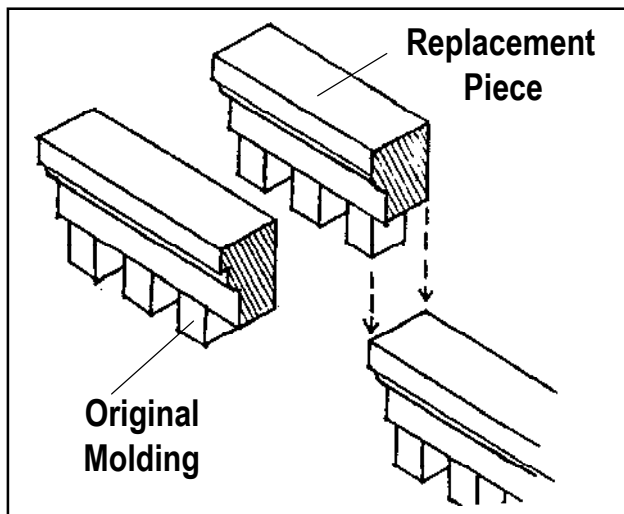
Treatment of Character-Defining Features

The historic wall materials, trim around openings, and historic cornices are among the character-defining features found on many of the buildings in Old Town that should be preserved.

1. **Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship which characterize a building, structure or site should be treated with sensitivity.**
 - Preserve intact features with appropriate maintenance techniques.
 - Don't obscure significant features with coverings or sign panels.
 - Features such as loading docks and metal canopies which relate to the commercial history of the district merit preservation as well.
2. **Avoid removing or altering any historic material or significant architectural features.**
 - Original materials and details that contribute to the significance of the structure are qualities that should be preserved whenever feasible.
 - Retain and preserve original wall material, which is typically brick, rather than replace it.
3. **Avoid adding materials, elements or details which were not part of the original building.**
 - For example, adding Victorian era porch details to a loading bay opening would be inappropriate.



Preserve all character-defining features that are intact.



Where replacement is required, one should remove only those portions that are deteriorated beyond repair.

4. Repair those features that are damaged.

- This method is preferred over replacement.
- Use repair procedures that will not harm the historic materials. For example, repoint eroded mortar from a brick wall with a mix that is similar in elasticity to that of the original such that the wall will not be damaged during changes in temperature.

5. Replace features that are missing or beyond repair.

- Reconstruct only those portions that are damaged beyond repair.
- Reconstruct the original element, based on adequate evidence, if possible. This option is the most strongly preferred.
- If evidence is missing, a simplified interpretation of similar elements may be considered.
- When feasible, use the same kind of material as the original. A substitute material may be acceptable if the form and design of the substitute itself conveys the visual appearance of the original material. For example, molded plastic cornice trim may be considered as a substitute for metal or stone in applications where durability of the product has been demonstrated.

General Design Alterations

Altering buildings to meet changing needs is a part of the tradition of Old Town and therefore sensitive changes may be considered for historic buildings; however, these alterations should occur in a manner that will not detract from the historic integrity of the property.

6. Design an alteration to be compatible with the historic character of the property.

- Avoid alterations that would hinder the ability to interpret the design character of the original building.
- Alterations that seek to imply an earlier period than that of the building are inappropriate. For example, adding Greek Revival details to a vernacular warehouse structure would falsely suggest the building was constructed earlier than it actually was.

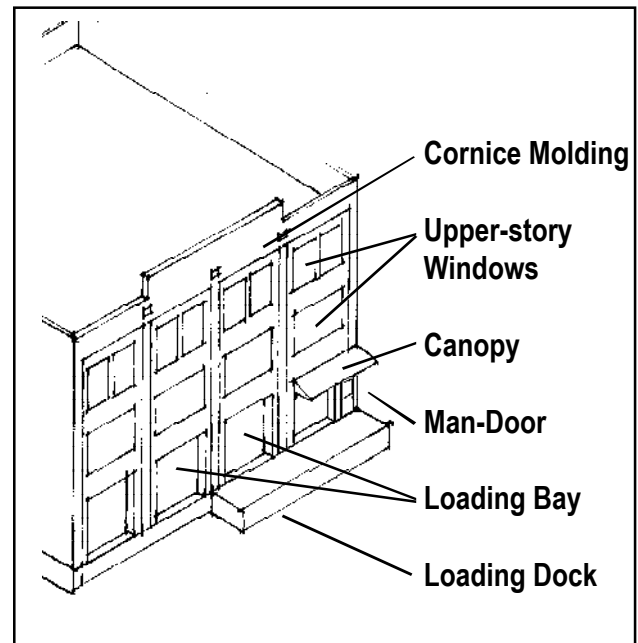
7. Avoid alterations that would damage historic features.

- For example, mounting a sign panel in a manner that causes decorative moldings to be chipped or removed would be inappropriate.

Old Town buildings possess components that were traditionally seen on warehouse structures. The repetition of these standard elements creates a visual unity on the street that is a character-defining feature of the district that should be preserved.

8. All renovations should preserve these character-defining elements:

- **Loading dock:** A raised landing for handling goods; some project from the facade while others are inset behind the building plane.
- **Loading bay doorway:** A large opening at the loading dock. Typically these are rectangular, although some are arched. Rolling overhead or horizontal sliding doors were used in these openings.
- **Man-door:** A small door for use by people entering the building. These are often similar in character to a storefront on a retail building.
- **Canopy:** A metal structure usually sheltering a loading dock. Some are horizontal, while others have a shed shape. Most are supported on metal brackets that are mounted to the wall.
- **Upper story windows:** Windows located on the floors above the ground level. These often have a vertical orientation. Styles vary widely and include painted wood and metal sash.
- **Cornice molding:** A decorative band at the top of the building, usually built up of projecting rows of brick.



Typical warehouse-type building components found in Old Town.



In this adaptive reuse, the original proportions of loading bay openings is preserved, even though storefront components are now used.



This replacement storefront on a warehouse type building, in the South Main Street Historic District in Memphis, Tennessee, exhibits the depth of sash details that were used traditionally in that area. This depth of detail is important because it creates a shadow that is a part of the character of the property. The storefront is seen in context in the photograph at right. Using frame elements that have a substantial depth are also preferred in Old Town.

Ground Floor Levels

9. **Preserve the historic character of the ground floor.**
 - Preserve loading docks, loading bay openings and window and door frames.
 - If the storefront glass is intact, it should be preserved.
10. **If the storefront or loading bay already is altered, restoring it to the original design is preferred.**
 - If evidence of the original design is missing, use a simplified interpretation of similar ground floors in the area.
11. **Alternative designs that are contemporary interpretations of traditional Old Town building features may be considered.**
 - Where the original is missing and no evidence of its character exists, a new design that uses the traditional elements may be considered.
 - However, the new design must continue to convey the character of typical storefronts, including the transparent character of the display window.
 - Altering the size of the historic window opening or blocking it with opaque materials is inappropriate.
 - Note that, in some cases, an original ground level may have been altered early in the history of the building, and may itself have taken on significance. Such alterations may be preserved.



Ground Level Details

- 12. Preserve significant storefront components where they exist.**
 - Some Old Town buildings have traditional storefronts at the street level.
 - Features such as the columns or piers that support the storefront framing, should not be altered, obscured or removed.
- 13. Preserve traditional warehouse-type features.**
 - Loading docks, metal canopies, and pavement grates are examples of elements associated with warehouse-type buildings that should be preserved.
- 14. Window and door details should appear similar in scale to those seen historically.**
 - Frame elements that have a substantial depth are preferred.



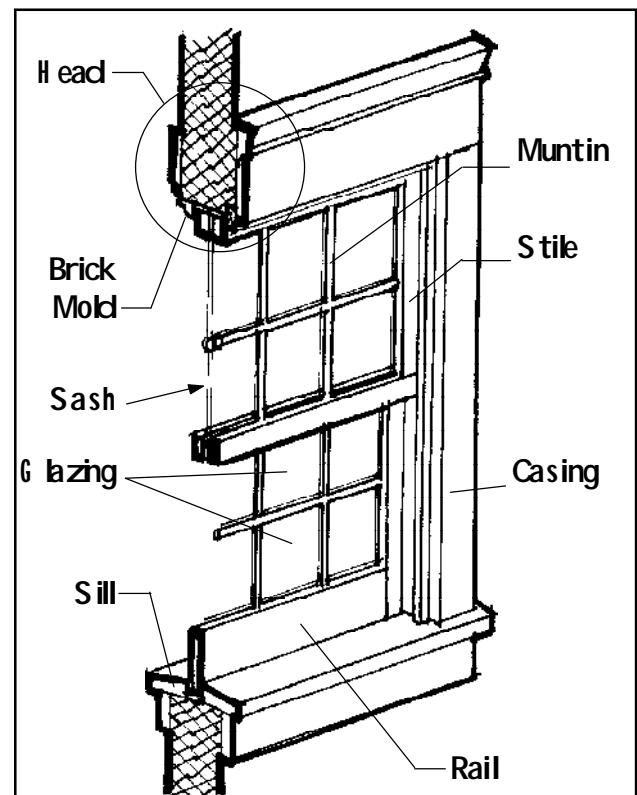
If evidence of the original design is missing, use a simplified interpretation of similar ground level details. This new storefront uses steel and masonry details similar to the industrial character of Old Town. (Boulder, Colorado)



Avoid altering the shape of window openings. These vertically-oriented windows have been blocked down and do not retain their original character. This is inappropriate.

Windows

- 15. Maintain the character of historically significant openings.**
 - The size and shape of original window openings are important characteristics that should be maintained. Avoid altering the shape of these features.
 - When these elements have already been altered, consider restoring them if their original condition can be determined.
- 16. Retain and repair existing window openings, when feasible.**
 - Historically, upper story windows had a vertical emphasis. The proportions of these windows contribute to the character of each commercial storefront.
 - This includes the window sash, lintels, sills, architraves, shutters, pediments, hoods, transoms and all hardware.
 - Visually duplicate the general design of the older window sash if new sash is to be used.



Typical upper-story window components for most historic double-hung windows.

Note: The images provided with the guidelines for the treatment of windows all represent different types of upper story windows seen on warehouse-type buildings in Old Town.



Maintain a window's true divided lights when feasible.



Where true divided lights are not possible, then snap-in muntins may be considered and should be installed on both sides of the glass. These snap-in muntins are only on the interior and do not create the shadow line seen on other historic buildings.

17. Maintain a window's true divided lights when feasible.

- If window replacement is necessary, then match the number and size of lights with the original window or other windows on the same floor.
- True divided lights are encouraged when replacing a window. Where true divisions are not possible, then snap-in muntins may be considered. Snap-in muntins should be installed on both sides of the glass.
- "Internal" muntins, sandwiched between two layers of glass, are inappropriate.

18. Genuine, transparent glass should be used in all windows and doors.

- Plastic and Plexiglass are inappropriate.
- Opaque, reflective, metallic finishes and tinted materials are inappropriate.

19. The sash and frame should appear similar to those seen originally on the building.

- Typically, early sash and frame components would have been made of wood. However, aluminum and metal casements were a part of the tradition later on in the district's history and therefore, may be considered.
- Whatever material is used, it should have a weather-protective finish. This usually means painting.

20. Blocking up windows is a part of the "transitional" character of an industrial district, and its use is not to be discouraged.

- When done, however, it should be used in limited numbers on secondary facades or in subordinate window openings. An entire facade of windows should, therefore, not be blocked up.
- Blocking up several windows should not significantly affect the character of the building or severely disrupt the pattern of window openings.

- 21. The material used to fill the void should maintain the proportions and character of the original opening.**
- Inset the material to create a shadow line similar to that seen from having a window inset in the opening.
 - A change in material or color of material should be considered.
 - If wood is used, then it should be painted to match other trim elements seen elsewhere on the building.
 - The material should be securely fastened in the opening and should not give the appearance that the building is vacant and derelict. The blocked up window should be regularly maintained.
- 22. Adding new openings to primary and secondary facades may be considered.**
- In some instances where one building was razed, the adjacent building now has a blank “party wall.” Where these exist, it may be acceptable to add new openings, when other codes permit.
 - These new windows should be in character with the building, but also may be seen as a later alteration in the manner in which they are detailed.



Blocking up windows is a part of the “transient” character of an industrial district, and its use is not to be discouraged.

Entries

- 23. Maintain historically significant doors.**
- The size and shape of original doors are important historic characteristics that contribute to the integrity of historic buildings in Old Town.
 - Use original doors and door hardware when they can be repaired and reused in place.
 - Avoid altering the shape of these features.
 - If these elements have already been altered, consider restoring them if their original condition can be determined.
- 24. When replacement is necessary, use a door style that is similar to that used originally, when feasible.**
- A wood door with an open glass panel is appropriate on most styles. The glass should make up at least two-thirds of the door.
 - The original doorway configuration should be preserved in any situation.



When replacement is necessary, use a door style that is found on similar buildings in the area. A wood door with an open glass panel is appropriate on most styles.



Installing new doors along a secondary elevation is appropriate.



Loading docks should be maintained when feasible. A loading dock should be recessed from the plane of the facade.



Railings on loading docks should read as a new addition that is simple in character.

25. Installing a new door is appropriate where it does not alter the character of a significant facade.

- Installing new doors along a secondary elevation is appropriate.

Loading Docks

26. Loading docks should be maintained when feasible.

- A loading dock should be recessed from the plane of the facade.
- If replacement is necessary, then it should be similar to those seen traditionally.
- Poured concrete and brick with a poured concrete slab are appropriate.

27. Railings on loading docks should read as a new addition that is simple in character.

- Railings were not a part of the tradition since they would have interfered with the day-to-day transactions occurring on the loading dock. However, since many of these buildings are introducing pedestrian related activities railings may be needed.
- A diversity of designs, as seen from building-to-building, is encouraged.

Loading Dock Doors

- 28. Original loading dock doors, which were typically overhead or sliding, should be maintained when feasible.**
- If missing, or replacement is necessary, then first consider replacement with another door similar to that used traditionally.
 - If storefront-type doors are needed, then one should be able to perceive the original opening. (See also the guidelines for “Blocking Up” window openings.)
- 29. Filling the opening with glass may be considered as an appropriate alternative.**
- Avoid using one large plate of glass for the entire opening.
 - Divided lights similar to those seen on upper-story windows could be considered; whereas, the lights themselves may be substantially larger.



Filling the opening with glass may be considered as an appropriate alternative. This new storefront for example, conveys the scale of a loading dock door while serving a new use as a display window.



Original loading dock doors, which were typically overhead (upper photograph) or sliding (lower photograph), should be maintained when feasible.



Don't cover or obscure original facade materials. Covering of original facades not only conceals interesting details but also interrupts the visual continuity of materials along the street.



If the original material already is obscured with a newer material, uncover it if feasible. This building in Lower Downtown Denver (just above and top) was returned to its original splendor after removing its 1960s era cover-up.

Facade Materials

The craftsmanship and textural qualities of masonry walls are key character-defining features of historic buildings in Old Town that should be preserved.

30. Preserve original facade materials.

- Traditionally, brick was the dominant building material in the Old Town District.
- Don't cover or obscure original facade materials. Covering of original facades not only conceals interesting details but also interrupts the visual continuity of materials along the street.
- If the original material already is obscured with a newer material, uncover it if feasible.

31. When replacement of facade material is needed, replace it in kind.

- For example, when patching an area of historic brick wall, match the original brick and mortar in color, profile and texture.
- By contrast, when installing new brick to fill a secondary opening, using a brick that contrasts subtly with the original may be appropriate, because it will enable one to distinguish the change as a part of the evolution of the history of the building.

Cornices

32. Preserve historic cornice details.

- Most historic warehouse buildings have cornices to cap their facades. Their repetition along the street contributes to the visual continuity on the block and is therefore an important feature.
- A straight or stepped parapet is appropriate on most buildings in Old Town.

33. Reconstruct a missing cornice when historic evidence of its design is available.

- Use historic photographs to determine design details of the original cornice or search for traces of the cornice profile on the building itself.
- When no evidence of the original is available, the substitution of another old cornice design for the original may be considered, provided that the substitute is similar to those seen historically in the area on similar buildings.

34. A simplified interpretation or a cornice design is also appropriate for a replacement cornice if evidence of the original is missing.

- Most cornices in Old Town are brick, although historic photographs do suggest that some stamped metal or built-up wood cornices also existed.

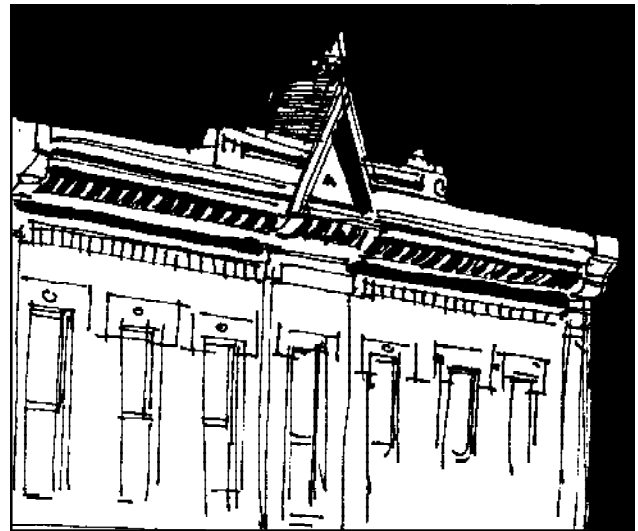
Roofs

35. Preserve the historic character of the roof.

- Altering a historic parapet line is inappropriate.
- Flat roofs (some with a slight pitch for water drainage) are appropriate.



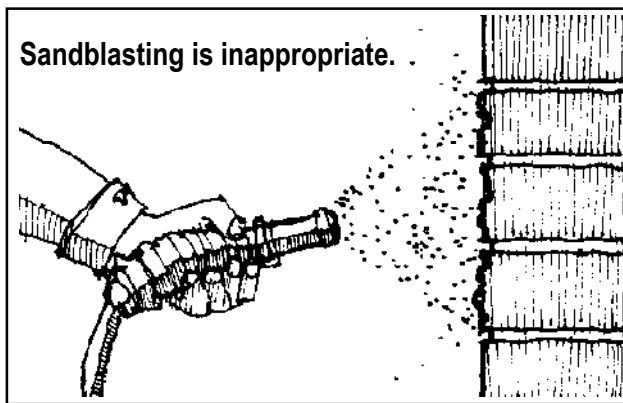
When a building is missing its cornice...



Reconstruct a missing cornice when historic evidence is available.



A simplified interpretation also is appropriate for a replacement cornice if evidence of the original is missing.



Use the gentlest possible procedures for cleaning and refinishing historic materials. Abrasive methods such as sandblasting are strongly discouraged, as they permanently erode building materials and finishes and accelerate deterioration.



Plan repainting carefully.

Technical Repairs

Many historic building elements survive that should be maintained in a manner that will preserve their integrity as character-defining features. These include masonry window sills, ornamental entry doors and cornices.

36. Use the gentlest means possible to clean the surface of a structure.

- Clean a test patch (in an inconspicuous place) to determine that the cleaning method will cause no damage to the material surface. Many procedures can actually have an unanticipated negative effect upon building materials and result in accelerated deterioration or a loss of character and therefore should be avoided.
- Abrasive methods such as sandblasting are inappropriate, as they permanently erode building materials and finishes and accelerate deterioration.
- If cleaning is to be considered, use a low pressure water wash. Chemical cleaning also may be considered if a test patch is first reviewed and negative effects are not found.

37. Repair deteriorated primary building materials by patching, piecing-in, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing the material.

- Avoid removing damaged materials when they can be repaired.

38. Plan repainting carefully.

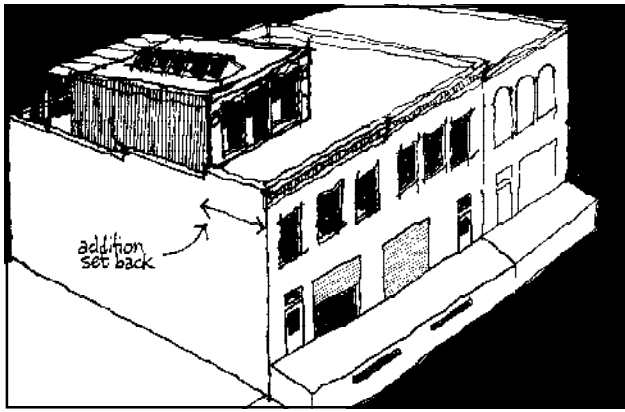
- If masonry has been painted, it may be preferable to continue to repaint it, because paint removal methods may cause damage to the building materials and finishes.
- Note that frequent repainting of trim materials may cause a build up of paint layers that obscure architectural details. When this occurs, consider stripping paint layers to retrieve details. If stripping is necessary, use the gentlest means possible, being careful not to damage architectural details and finishes.

39. Generally, brick that was not painted historically should remain unpainted.

- Masonry naturally has a water-protective layer, or patina, to protect it from the elements. Painting masonry walls can seal in moisture already in the masonry thereby not allowing it to breathe and causing extensive damage over the years.
- Painting of brick, unless it is mismatched or so deteriorated that it cannot withstand weather, is inappropriate.

40. Preserve historic mortar characteristics.

- Original mortar, in good condition, should be preserved in place.
- Repoint only those mortar joints where there is evidence of a moisture problem or when a substantial amount of the mortar is missing.
- Duplicate the old mortar in strength, composition, color, texture and joint width and profile.
- Mortar joints should be cleared with hand tools. Using electric saws and hammers to remove mortar can seriously damage the adjacent brick.
- Avoid using mortar with a high portland cement content, which will be substantially harder than the brick and does not allow for expansion and contraction. The result is deterioration of the brick itself.



An addition should be set back from any primary, character-defining facade and its architectural details should be kept simple.



A rooftop addition should be set back substantially, to preserve the perception of the historic scale of the building. This addition in Lower Downtown Denver cannot be seen until well away from the building. This is considered appropriate.

Additions to Historic Buildings

Examples exist in Old Town where property owners expanded the size of a building by constructing an addition. Typically, these were constructed using materials and details similar to the original structure. Compatible additions to existing historic buildings may also be considered, especially when such work will help to extend the adaptive use potential of the building. All such additions should meet the following guidelines:

- 41. An addition should be compatible in scale, materials and character with the main building.**
 - An addition should relate to the historic building in mass, scale and form. It should be designed to remain subordinate to the main structure.
 - The addition should be subtly distinguishable in its design from the historic portion.
 - An addition to the front of a historic building is generally inappropriate when it would alter character-defining features. An addition to the side, however, may be considered.
- 42. A rooftop addition should be set back substantially, to preserve the perception of the historic scale of the building.**
 - If a rooftop addition is appropriate, a minimum setback of 25 feet from the building front should be considered.
 - A rooftop addition shall be simple in design to prevent it from competing with the primary facade.